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July 24, 1962

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The Department assesses this exchange and a subsequent one on July 23 as totally unproductive. Nothing essentially new was forthcoming from Gromyko, although these aspects of the U. S. S. R. position are worthy of note:

1. The assertion that East German sovereignty is a "vital interest" of the U. S. S. R.
2. Reiteration of Gromyko's contention that the allied presence in West Berlin represents a "NATO base within East Germany."
3. Relationship between the U. S. S. R.'s security and the end of Western occupation.

Sincerely yours,

sgk

Frederick S. Patton

H. R. Leary

C/W - EUR - Mr.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED by *TR*

Date June 26, 1991

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In answer to the Secretary's question, Gromyko said he had received a report from Ambassador Dobrynin on the latter's discussion with the President had said that the situation was not improved from the U. S. S. R. point of view. Gromyko said the President had only reaffirmed the U. S. position, that is, no peace treaty with East Germany, preservation of the status quo in West Berlin and of the regime under which West Berlin is a military base of the NATO Western powers.

The Secretary asked Gromyko to explain why the U. S. S. R. presses the question of the presence of Western forces in West Berlin as it does, in view of the fact that Gromyko knew there is no possibility of agreement on this issue. The Secretary said we had clearly explained why we cannot abandon our responsibility in West Berlin. The Secretary observed that the U. S. had indicated there were some areas of possible agreement, and yet the U. S. S. R. had concentrated instead on the question of allied troops. He pointed out that nothing could be done about the presence of Western forces in West Berlin but that peaceful adjustment was possible on other points. He recalled that the President had told Khrushchev in Vienna that the presence of forces in West Berlin was fundamental and of vital interest. The Secretary emphasized that the U. S. was in West Berlin and had to stay there. The Secretary and Gromyko agreed that the question of Western forces was a crucial one, because -- the Secretary said -- the Soviets had made it so.

Gromyko said that from a purely military viewpoint the number of the Western troops in West Berlin is insignificant in today's situation, whether the total was 10, 20, 30, or 40,000. However, he added, the U. S. insists that the troops remain. He said the Soviets had concluded that there were four reasons for our insistence on this: (1) The U. S. wants to have a NATO base in the center of East Germany, (2) The U. S. wants to maintain the occupation regime in West Berlin, (3) The U. S. wants to preserve all the tension-making potentiality of 1 and 2, and (4) The U. S. wants to continue to ignore the sovereign rights of the German Democratic Republic, in the center of which West Berlin is located. Gromyko, calling all this a source of dangerous tensions, said the Soviet's most recent proposal for withdrawing troops on both sides would permit a solution which would not prejudice the prestige of any party. Gromyko insisted that the U. S. S. R. did not wish to

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pocket West Berlin of a single square yard of its territory. Indeed, the U. S. S. R. is ready to guarantee the independence of West Berlin and non-interference in its international affairs, along with having the U. N. guarantee West Berlin's independence and its status as a free city.

The Secretary agreed with Gromyko that the Western forces in West Berlin were not to be regarded as a significant factor in the present military sense. This, the Secretary said, was precisely the reason why the U. S. cannot understand why the Soviets attach so much importance to these forces as a NATO base. The Secretary pointed out that these forces are not NATO forces but separate U. S., U. K., and French forces. He added, however, that NATO would of course support the tripartite forces if anything should happen, as probably would be the case with regard to Warsaw Pact forces in that area.

On the question of access to West Berlin, the Secretary emphasized that the U. S. sees no legal or other way that the GDR could be given out of thin air rights which cut across the rights of the Western powers. Because the West is in West Berlin by right -- and not as an irritant -- that right cannot be abrogated nor transferred to the GDR. The Secretary said the West does not want its access to interfere with the rights of GDR authorities but it believes that the GDR should not interfere with the West's access. The Secretary saw no reason why this mutual non-interference should present a particular problem.

As for the matter of prestige, the Secretary emphasized that the U. S. could not permit the U. S. S. R. to decide what particular proposal would satisfy U. S. prestige considerations. The Secretary thought the Soviets may have created for themselves a prestige problem regarding the presence of Western forces in the U. S. S. R.'s public discussion of Berlin. The Secretary noted that if one country demands satisfaction for prestige demands for prestige reasons, this places a problem in such concrete problems and becomes an unsettling factor in international relations. Meanwhile, the Secretary remarked that, although he certainly was aware, no arrangement in Berlin could be made permanent until the whole German problem was resolved.

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The Secretary told Gromyko that the Soviets had perhaps not given sufficient attention to a question which the President had raised. This is whether between two radically different social systems some arrangements could be worked out whereby they could work together peacefully and contribute to world peace. In this connection, the Secretary recalled Khrushchev's July 28 speech at the Moscow Press Conference. He said that it was somewhat surprising to ideology -- but that in it Khrushchev had said -- "We, the Soviet Union, are ready to discuss the question of ending the arms race for the benefit of all peoples." The Secretary said that while the Berlin question may not be resolved easily or quickly, there are broader relationships between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. He said both countries are now at the crossroads and it is important that they take the road which is in the interest of their peoples and not a road which might lead to implacable hostility. The President's efforts to reach interim arrangements on Berlin were designed to provide time for both sides to work out their problems on a rational and reasonable basis, and thus avoid disaster.

At about this point in the conversation Gromyko embarked upon a lengthy statement which he read from a prepared text. He began by stating that the U.S.S.R. cannot agree that the U.S. has a universal right of determining what accords with vital interests on either side of the dispute. The Secretary interjected that neither side has such a right. Gromyko then said that the U.S.S.R. is convinced that it would be best for the U.S. and other Western powers, the U.S.S.R., and other countries/sign one or two peace treaties with the two German states. However, in view of the objectives of the U.S. and its allies, the U.S.S.R. is allowing for the possibility of the peace treaty being signed by the U.S.S.R. and some other countries with the GDR alone. Gromyko said that whenever the U.S.S.R. has advanced proposals for reaching agreement on a peace treaty and of normalizing the situation in West Berlin by making it a free city, the U.S. usually does not answer or if it does says nyet, nyet, and nyet. From this, Gromyko said, the U.S.S.R. concludes that the U.S. has least interest in reaching agreement but does not want to say so publicly. Again repeating that West Berlin constitutes a major issue, Gromyko said the question of withdrawal of Western troops has become the stumbling block in the way of agreement. He said he will not say to the American people that the U.S.S.R. is ready to discuss the question of what the U.S. wants. Gromyko again told the U.S.S.R. has also expressed its

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willingness to respect the independence of West Berlin and of the rights of the population and to live under a system of its own choosing, and to guaranteed independent political life for West Berlin under the aegis of the U. M. At the same time, Gromyko said, the U. S. S. R. cannot agree to perpetuate the occupation regime of West Berlin, which has entailed, first, not to have a NATO military base in the heart of the GDR, and second, the U. S. position of occupation troops would complicate U. S. S. R. to resolve matters in connection with a German peace settlement without the Western powers' participation and accord. Therefore, Gromyko said, the U. S. S. R. and certain other states would sign a peace treaty with the GDR and would take necessary measures to provide for unwavering respect for GDR sovereignty. So that the Secretary would correctly understand Soviet policy, Gromyko said, he repeated that the U. S. S. R. would do this only if there were no agreed solution. He said the U. S. had set an example for the U. S. S. R. to follow in acting on the Japanese Peace Treaty.

Gromyko then turned to alleged threats which he said were heard from prominent Western personalities both in the U. S. and Europe. He said it was time that those persons understood that threats had no effect on the U. S. S. R. and would be duly rebuffed by it. Without identifying any of the personalities, Gromyko said the U. S. S. R. had everything it needed to stand up for itself and its allies and to safeguard GDR sovereignty. He said that if anyone in the West should embark on the slippery and dangerous path of trying his luck in military adventures he, Gromyko, would see that he who sows wind reaps whirlwind.

Gromyko said the Secretary's statement that both sides are responsible for the solution of the Berlin problem is incompatible with the U. S. attitude, which Gromyko characterized as insisting on a solution which would be entirely suitable to the U. S. alone. This solution, Gromyko said, would preserve a dangerous and explosive situation in Europe, engendered by the maintenance of the occupation regime in West Berlin and of Western forces and a NATO military base there. Gromyko accused the U. S. of trying to set aside the legitimate interests of the GDR, a sovereign and independent state. No agreement is possible without these interests being observed, he said.

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Regarding Gromyko's reference to the West's myths to Soviet proposals, the Secretary remarked that it was true the West had said no to a number of completely unacceptable proposals. The Secretary pointed out that the Soviet proposals were aimed at changing the basic position of the allies in West Berlin which the Soviets must have known to be unacceptable. The Secretary pointed out that in all his conversations with Gromyko he had emphasized that the two countries had equal responsibility for peace in the world at large rather than for Germany and Berlin in view of the fact that we share that responsibility with other powers. As for Gromyko's allegations about threats from the West, the Secretary told Gromyko that he himself was in the very process of threatening the West and the U. S. The Secretary pointed out that the U. S. military build-up has been in direct relation to Soviet activities since World War II.

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